

Testimony of April Raczka, MS MFT
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Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
March 15, 2010

HB 5473: AN ACT CONCERNING THE Statute of Limitations for Bringing an Action for Damages for the Sexual Assault of a Minor

Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is April Raczka. I am the Director of the New Britain and Hartford Sexual Assault Crisis Service and a state certified Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor/Advocate. I am writing in request for support of House Bill 5473.

The YWCA New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Service provides services to over 45 towns in Hartford and portions of Tolland County. I have worked with the Sexual Assault Crisis Service in several capacities in the course of over 10 years. Statistics show that more than 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 years old. Some of the most vulnerable clients I have worked with have been victimized at the hands of Dr. George Reardon. In 2008, when evidence was discovered and this case was brought forward, I spoke with dozens of men and women who found it difficult to express in words what this finding meant, given the fact that the perpetrator (Dr. Reardon) had since died. These clients did not report feeling "closure" or validation, but that their healing was only just about to begin. For decades they were silenced due to the power of Dr. Reardon. Perpetrators use this power and control to prey upon children. Connecticut Statistics show more than 90% of victims know their perpetrator. The families of these child victims knew him and they trusted him, he was their children's doctor.

This is an unspeakable crime, literally. Perpetrators, such as Dr. Reardon, had one main goal: To ensure their victims remain silent; according to the victims I spoke with over the past two years. They do this by reinforcing their power over the victims and gaining the trust of their parents or caregivers, thus ensuring that no one will believe the child's word against that of the powerful adult and that evidence is never found.

While working with some of the victims I have found that their pain and suffering as a result of this trauma has included the following: loss of trust, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, relationship issues, anger, breakdown of their family relationships, suicide (of siblings who were also victims), self mutilation and more. While speaking to these clients, there has been a common thread, the feeling that no one would believe them.

These children were threatened by Reardon, these children were bribed by Reardon, and blamed as well. These innocent, vulnerable victims who are now adults would benefit from

having justice served. They have said this to me one after another, time and again. Many of them have lost their childhood and can never get that back. Many have lost their relationships with their parents or other family members due to lack of evidence at the time they disclosed.

Since we know that this scenario is all too common for child sexual abuse survivors it is essential that the statute of limitation be eliminated. As I mentioned, their healing is only just beginning. This discovery was not the end for them, as victims of crime who did not have a voice; they deserve to have justice served. Many of these cases are going to trial as of Spring 2011, and my hope for the victims is that they can depend on our judicial system to support them this time as not only has there been evidence discovered but they have suffered too long already.

If you would like to further discuss this with me I may be contacted at 860.225.4681 ext.211. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

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Director SACS
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